

Message Text

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15
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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R 240725Z OCT 76
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6493
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4990

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, KU
SUBJECT: KUWAIT REMAINS TRANQUIL UNDER RULE BY DECREE

REF: (A) KUWAIT 4265, (B) KUWAIT 4143, (C) KUWAIT 4674,
(D) KUWAIT 4774.

1. SUMMARY. NEARLY TWO MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE
AMIR, ON AUGUST 29, SUSPENDED PARTS OF THE CONSTITUTION,
DISSOLVED THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AND AUTHORIZED TIGHTER
CONTROL OF THE PRESS. KUWAIT HAS BEEN TRANQUIL, EVEN IN THE
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FACE OF ADDITIONAL CONTROVERSIAL GOVERNMENT MEASURES, AND

THE GOK HAS TRIED TO PROJECT AN ACTIVE, FORWARD-LOOKING IMAGE. THERE REMAIN, HOWEVER, SOME UNDERCURRENTS OF CONCERN OVER INTERNAL SECURITY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PRESS. IN THE WEEKS SINCE THE GOVERNMENT'S SURPRISING MOVES, THE KUWAITI PRESS HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO HEEL, WITH FIVE PUBLICATIONS SUSPENDED. (ONE OF THESE, THE DAILY AL WATAN, WAS ALLOWED TO REOPEN IN EARLY OCTOBER, AFTER A 30-DAY SUSPENSION.) PRESS EDITORIALS HAVE BEEN TOEING THE OFFICIAL LINE LAID DOWN IN EARLY SEPTEMBER; THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY TWO NOTABLE DEPARTURES FROM THE NEW STRICTURES ON PRESS CONTENT. FIRST, AS WE REPORTED, THE PRESS APPARENTLY WAS ALLOWED TO CRITICIZE SYRIAN INTRANSIGENCE REGARDING LEBANON (REF C). SECOND, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER/MINISTER OF INFORMATION CHASTIZED ONE NEWSPAPER FOR LABELING AS A "GANG" THE LABOR LEADERS ARRESTED ON SECURITY GROUNDS IN LATE SEPTEMBER. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE GOK IS USING A POLICY OF "SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT" OF THE NEW, TOUGHER PRESS LAW TO SUIT ITS OWN POLITICAL ENDS. ALSO, WE HAVE ONE UNCONFIRMED REPORT WHICH ALLEGES THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO DEPORT SOME LEADING NON-KUWAITI JOURNALISTS WHO ARE THOUGHT NOT TO HAVE THE BEST INTERESTS OF KUWAIT AT HEART. RUMORS OF SUCH PENDING ACTION, ALONG WITH THE STEPS THE GOK HAS ALREADY TAKEN, HAVE REDUCED THE KUWAITI WRITTEN PRESS FROM A RELATIVELY EXUBERANT, AGGRESSIVE INSTITUTION TO A COLLECTION OF POTBOILERS. WHILE THE PAP THEY PRODUCE MAY ENCOURAGE POLITICAL TRANQUILITY, IT ALSO INDUCES SLEEP. ON THE OTHER HAND, INACCURACIES AND DISTORTIONS ARE LESS PREVALENT.

2. THE PRESSURE GROUPS. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, MOST KUWAITIS SEEM TO HAVE ACQUIESCED IN OR APPROVED OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS OF AUGUST 29. WHILE KEY LABOR LEADERS APPARENTLY OBJECTED, AND OTHER REPORTING SUGGESTS THAT A VARIETY OF OTHER KUWAITI PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES JOINED IN THE TRADE UNION COMPLAINT, THERE HAS BEEN NO ORGANIZED PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION OF OPPOSITION OR EVEN CONCERN OVER THE FUTURE OF KUWAITI DEMOCRACY. SCHOOLS REOPENED IN EARLY OCTOBER WITHOUT INCIDENT, THOUGH WE HAD SOME REPORTS OF PLANS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENT UNREST. EQUALLY

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IMPORTANT, FROM ALL REPORTS, THE ORGANIZED LEADERSHIP OF THE LARGE PALESTINIAN MINORITY IN KUWAIT HAS DECIDED TO KEEP HANDS OFF KUWAITI INTERNAL AFFAIRS--WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY ORGANIZED PALESTINIAN RESIDENT GROUP PLANS OR DESIRES TO CAUSE TROUBLE IN KUWAIT.

4. THREATS AND POLICE ACTIVITY. WE DO, HOWEVER, HAVE A FEW RECENT REPORTS OF TELEPHONE THREATS TO VARIOUS PLACES,

INCLUDING THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND THE SYRIAN EMBASSY (BUT NOT THE U.S. EMBASSY). IN BOTH THESE CASES, THE THREATS APPARENTLY WERE BELIEVED AND ACTED UPON--THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR REPORTEDLY HAS BEGUN RANDOM SEARCHES FOR BOMBS IN GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS AND THE SYRIAN AMBASSADOR LEFT TOWN (REF D). ALSO IN EARLY OCTOBER, THE POLICE RESUMED THEIR NIGHT-TIME RANDOM ROADBLOCKS (CHECKING IDENTITY DOCUMENTS AND SEARCHING SOME CARS) AND THEY HAVE ADDED SOME ROAD CHECKS DURING THE DAY. THE NIGHT-TIME SCRUTINY OF TRAFFIC HAD BEEN ROUTINE DURING RECENT MONTHS; IT HAD BEEN SUSPENDED DURING THE RAMADAN - ID PERIOD.

5. OTHER GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY. THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE MOVING RAPIDLY TO PROMULGATE A NUMBER OF DECREE LAWS WHICH WILL BE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFIT TO RESIDENTS OF KUWAIT, AS NOTED IN REF A. ALSO, THE CABINET HAS ORGANIZED ITSELF INTO FUNCTIONALLY-ORIENTED, INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEES APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO MORE RAPIDLY PREPARE LEGISLATION, AND THERE IS MUCH TALK OF INCREASING EFFICIENCY, IMPROVING GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL PRACTICES, AND FACILITATING PUBLIC ACCESS TO OFFICIALS. THESE AND OTHER STEPS HAVE PROJECTED AN IMAGE OF AN ADMINISTRATION THAT IS BUSY, FORWARD LOOKING AND HUMANE, BUT WE ARE UNABLE TO ASSESS YET THEIR LONG TERM OR EVEN SHORT TERM EFFECT ON THE PUBLIC. WE DO HAVE ONE CURIOUS REPORT FROM AN INFLUENTIAL PRIVATE KUWAITI TO THE EFFECT THAT THE GOK INTENDS TO CEASE ADVANCING OR PLACING PALESTINIANS IN SIGNIFICANT GOVERNMENT POSITIONS FORTHWITH--PALESTINIANS NOW HOLD ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY - LEVEL JOBS IN SEVERAL MINISTRIES. ALSO, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOK IS SEEKING TO UNDERMINE THE CREDIBILITY OF WRITTEN STATEMENTS OF DISSENT--THERE HAVE BEEN TWO CIRCULATED SINCE AUGUST 29, ONE BY THE KUWAITI JOURNALISTS SOCIETY AND ONE BY THE KUWAIT WORKERS CONFEDERATION--BY CLAIMING THAT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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APPARENT SIGNERS OF SUCH STATEMENTS WERE UNAUTHORIZED TO SIGN.

6. NATIONAL POLICY. WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN EVIDENCE OF A BASIC CHANGE IN THE RESTRICTIVE KUWAITI NATIONALITY LAW WHICH COULD, OF COURSE, BE LIBERALIZED TO GIVE CITIZENSHIP TO PALESTINIANS AND OTHER ARABS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO MAKE A USEFUL CONTRIBUTION TO KUWAIT. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN SOME PRESS REPORTING TO THE EFFECT THAT THE NATIONALITY LAW IS TO BE LIBERALIZED, AND THERE HAS BEEN AT LEAST ONE "SPECIAL BILL" TO NATIONALIZE CERTAIN ALIEN POLICEMEN AND SOLDIERS BY DECREE, BUT WE SEE LITTLE REAL MOVEMENT TOWARD MORE GENEROUS GRANTING OF BENEFITS OF KUWAIT CITIZENSHIP.
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